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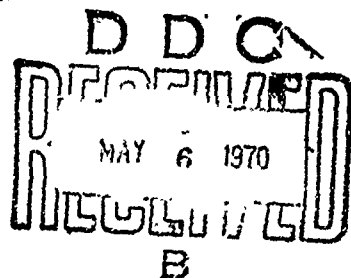
CRITICAL COMBAT PERFORMANCES,  
KNOWLEDGES, AND SKILLS REQUIRED OF THE  
INFANTRY RIFLE PLATOON LEADER

Bayonet Knife and Hand-to-Hand Combat

by  
Henry E. Kelly

23 July 1968

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HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH OFFICE

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The Human Resources Research Office is a nongovernmental agency of The George Washington University. HumRRO's mission in work performed for the Department of the Army (DA Contract 44-188-ARO-2) is to conduct research in the fields of training, motivation, and leadership.

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Work Unit LEAD: Work Sub-Unit I

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HumRRO Division No. 4  
(Infantry)

The George Washington University  
HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH OFFICE  
operating under contract with  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

## FOREWORD

Work Unit LEAD has as its objective the improvement of officer training in the critical skills required for effective combat leadership in small infantry platoons, and is being conducted by the Human Resources Research Office at Fort Benning, Georgia, under the sponsorship of the U.S. Continental Army Command.

In Sub-Unit I, performances, knowledges, and skills required of the leader of an infantry rifle platoon are being identified and categorized according to 41 comprehensive subject areas. This document details the requirements in the area of the bayonet knife and hand-to-hand combat.

The LEAD research is being performed at HumRRO Division No. 4 (Infantry), Fort Benning, Georgia. The present Director of Research of the Division is Dr. T. O. Jacobs, who is also the Work Unit Leader. Dr. Carl J. Lange was the Director of Research when the research was begun.

Military support for the study was provided by the U.S. Army Infantry Human Research Unit, Fort Benning, Georgia. LTC Chester I. Christie, Jr. is the present Unit Chief.

HumRRO research is conducted under Army Contract DA 44-188-ARO-2 and under Army Project 2J024701A712 01, Training, Motivation, and Leadership Research.

Meredith P. Crawford  
Director  
Human Resources Research Office

## BAYONET KNIFE AND HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

### General Considerations

#### Introduction

The bayonet knife is designed for use when the primary weapon of the individual soldier cannot be used for one or more reasons. As with other emergency-type weapons, a tendency exists to neglect the bayonet's use, both in training and combat. When a situation requires the bayonet's use, however, it is indispensable. It is a command responsibility of the IRPL to ensure that his men are trained to employ the bayonet both individually and in groups where teamwork is required, and that it is carried in combat by all men who are so equipped, unless another knife-type weapon serving the same purpose replaces it or competent orders direct otherwise.

The bayonet knife can be used in its primary role as a bayonet attached to the rifle, or alternatively used detached as a knife or general purpose utility tool. As a knife, its use is of primary importance where a silent weapon is required in close proximity to the enemy, or when contact is so close that firearms cannot be safely or effectively used, as in a confined cave or tunnel or in defending against an opponent who jumps in upon an individual resting in a foxhole.

Skill developed in the use of the bayonet knife builds the self-confidence of an individual who has been realistically trained in its use. The soldier who is well-trained in bayonet combat and in hand-to-hand fighting increases in aggressive spirit and the essential will to fight. Such training also constitutes an excellent physical conditioner closely paralleling the physical requirements of combat.

Current unconventional combat with its increased emphasis upon long-range patrolling, clearing operations in built-up or heavily vegetated areas, and the greatly increased close range, limited visibility combat encountered emphasizes the combat potential of the bayonet knife, not only as a bayonet but as a knife in hand-to-hand combat. There will be times when close terrain and confined spaces makes the knife the only useable weapon. Beyond that, emergencies arise in hand-to-hand combat where the individual soldier must depend upon his own natural resources, at times aided only by improvised weapons.

The bayonet knife is a handy tool in probing for hidden mines, caches of munitions or supplies, and even for personnel hidden in spider holes. In the clearing of caves, bunkers, or tunnels where even the firing of the pistol is precluded, the bayonet knife is an essential weapon. It is also handy in opening food containers and as a utensil both when heating foods and when eating.

At times, in certain types of combat, a commander may consider it advisable not to carry the bayonet, either because of its weight or, more likely, the added encumbrance of another piece of equipment for the soldier to add to the numerous items of his load. Substitution of another weapon/tool such as a bolo or machete may also be considered as advisable in jungle or thickly overgrown terrain when directed by competent authority.

The use of the bayonet in its primary role on the rifle also creates fear in the opponent, particularly in an adversary who has an overly developed distaste for close combat. The infantry soldier must be hardened to realize that in combat one either kills or is killed and thorough bayonet training constitutes an aid to his survival provided such training is realistic and varied and not limited to enthusiastic grunting while engaged in thrusting at a passive bayonet dummy.

### Scope

The performances, knowledges, skills, habits, and attitudes covered in this paper are those the IRPL must possess to train and lead a rifle platoon in combat. Where the knowledge or skill in question is one which must also be possessed by other members of the rifle platoon, it is assumed that the IRPL is also trained and motivated to ensure that his men are trained to an acceptable standard of proficiency.\*

In combat the bayonet will most often be employed upon the individual initiative of the user without command guidance once the bayonet has been fixed. Precombat training in the combat employment of the weapon is, therefore, of more than usual importance to the IRPL.

The material in this paper relates to all the papers on tactical operations, especially those dealing with physical conditioning, patrolling, and offensive combat. Other directly related information will be found in the papers on Mission, Organization, and General Operation of the Rifle Platoon; Defensive Operations; Mounted and Dismounted Platoon Combat Formations; Squad Formations, Battle Drill, and Elementary Fire and Maneuver; and Technique of Fire of the Rifle Squad.

### Material

Rifle, M16 or M14.

Other TOE weapons and equipment, especially for close contact, such as caliber .45 pistol.

Flashlights and other similar illumination equipment for use in confined areas such as caves, bunkers, or tunnels.

Hand-to-hand improvised equipment such as ropes and other expedient silencing equipment.

Special clothing and shoes for silent close-up movement.

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\* For additional details see FM 21-150, "Combatives."

### Battlefield Cues

Anticipated close contact with the enemy as prior to the assault of a hostile position or in the final defense of a penetrated friendly position.

Patrol operations where use of the fixed bayonet may be required as a silent weapon.

Anticipated hand-to-hand operations requiring silent use of a knife weapon.

Individual operations in confined spaces where firearms cannot be used with safety, as in small caves or tunnels.

Situations where the intermingling of friendly and enemy troops preclude the use of firearms or grenades.

Situations which may involve use of a knife and/or hand-to-hand techniques due to the lack of any other weapon.

Situations requiring use of the knife as a probe for mines or boobytraps in the absence of a more effective detector.

Situations requiring use of the knife as a digging tool in the cautious uncovering of a detected mine or boobytrap.

Situations in which individuals are detailed to guard or otherwise control prisoners of war.

Situations requiring use of the knife as an improvised tool or utensil in the absence of a more effective specifically designed tool or utensil.

Indications of the need for maintenance, cleaning or sharpening of the bayonet knife.

Performances, Knowledges, and Skills

1. THE IRPL WILL ENSURE THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE PLATOON ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE CAPABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE BAYONET KNIFE THEY ARE ISSUED AND CARRY AND MAINTAIN IT PROPERLY.

He must : know that the bayonet knife is dual-purposed for use either as a bayonet or as a knife and that: 1

- a. The Bayonet Knife M7 issued for use with the M16A1 rifle and its bayonet scabbard, the M8A1, together weigh about 1 lb.
- b. The Bayonet Knife M6 issued for use with the 7.62-mm rifle M14 and its M8A1 bayonet scabbard together weigh about 1 lb.

: ensure that all members of the platoon maintain the bayonet knife properly, to include: 2

- a. The blade is kept sharp and free of nicks or dents by periodic grinding, filing, or stoning.
- b. That the metal parts are kept clean, free of rust, and lightly oiled.
- c. The compress locking click operates freely in fixing and unfixing the bayonet knife.
- d. That the scabbard is clean and slightly and, where necessary, repainted with lusterless olive drab paint.

: ensure that all members of the platoon are indoctrinated against misuses of the bayonet which result in breakage or undue wear. 3

2. THE IRPL WILL ENSURE THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE PLATOON ARE QUALIFIED TO USE THE BAYONET AS A WEAPON IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.

He will : ensure that his men are practiced in the techniques of hand-to-hand combat with the bayonet in combination with the use of other means of hand-to-hand combat including the various counters, kicks, blows, and other movements used. 4



: ensure that bayonet training is conducted under realistic conditions designed to physically condition and harden the participants for the end purpose of infantry training, close combat. 5

: ensure that his men know that use of the bayonet may be vital under combat conditions where: 6

- a. Silence and secrecy are required, as in a night attack or on a patrol.
- b. Contact is so close, with friendly and enemy troops so intermingled, that the use of rifle fire or grenades is impracticable.
- c. Contact is so close that time is not available to reload an empty weapon to meet a fast closing enemy.

: ensure that his men aggressively employ these principles of bayonet fighting: 7

- a. Take rapid, relentless advantage of any opening presented by an opponent.
- b. Create an opening if none is presented, by feinting or parrying an opponent's weapon and then driving the blade or weapon butt into the opponent with killing force.
- c. Utilize these vulnerable target areas of an opponent's body: the throat, face, chest, abdomen, and groin.
- d. Utilize, at times, an initial threat against the throat, prepared, as the opponent instinctively protects himself, to drive home a thrust to a vulnerable area left exposed.
- e. Utilize a relentless follow-up attack should the initial thrust, parry, or butt stroke fail to make contact.

: ensure that his men are practiced in the basic attack positions under realistic combat conditions to include the guard, short guard, and high port. (The rest positions [at ease and rest] and the high port and crossover position are utilized in training; the whirl position can be utilized both in training and in combat when attacked from the rear.) 8

: ensure that his men are practiced in using the thrust and butt stroke movements in progressively more difficult situations and under realistic combat conditions.

9

a. Thrusts: long thrust and short thrust.

b. Butt strokes: vertical butt stroke, horizontal butt stroke, to include follow-up movements such as the slash and smash.

c. Parry movements: parry right - long thrust, and parry left - short thrust.

d. Follow-Ups: should initial thrust fail, additional thrusts, butt strokes, or parries are used to maintain the momentum of attack.

: utilize difficult assault course practice to develop skill and stamina in all members of the platoon and to assess their ability and qualification.

10

: utilize pugil training, employing pugil stick and protective equipment to develop individual aggressiveness and confidence continued during group assault tactics to achieve teamwork including quick reaction to emergencies requiring mutual assistance.

11

3. THE IRPL WILL ENSURE THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE PLATOON ARE QUALIFIED TO USE THE DAYONET AS A KNIFE IN ALL TYPES OF HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.

He will : ensure that his men are indoctrinated to realize that occasions arise in combat where the individual member of an infantry rifle platoon must engage in hand-to-hand combat without the aid of his basic weapon under conditions where he must win to survive.

12

: drill his men in these five fundamentals of hand-to-hand combat, without the use of the individual's basic weapon, necessitating confident, aggressive employment of:

13

a. Any available weapon, issued or expedient.

b. Maximum strength against an adversary's most vulnerable point.

c. Maintenance of mental and physical balance while trying to destroy the opponent's mental and physical balance, even if only momentarily.

d. The opponent's momentum to one's own advantage.

e. All details of skill precisely, while progressively developing speed and dexterity.

: ensure that his men are indoctrinated in the use, during close combat, in addition to the bayonet knife, of every available weapon, natural or improvised; drilling them in the skilled use of these means to the extent circumstances permit:

14

a. Natural weapons including the knife edge of one's hand, the fist, the extended fingers in gouging action against the eyes or face, the boot kick, normally delivered with the boot toe, and one's knees, elbows, shoulders, head, or teeth.

b. Improvised weapons including: sand or dirt thrown into the opponent's eyes or face, an entrenching tool, steel helmet, machete, or even a stone, stout stick, or other object at hand.

: drill his men to exploit rapidly an opponent's exposure of a critical target in one of these three vulnerable body regions:

15

a. Head and neck: the eyes, neck, and nose.

b. Trunk: stomach, the groin, spine, and kidneys.

c. Limbs: the knee, instep, and arm joints.

: drill his men in maintaining balance, and protecting the most vulnerable portions of the body through utilization of these basic positions and movements:

16

a. Right and left guard positions along the lines of a boxer's stance with the fingers extended and joined.

b. Rear guard position, quickly reversing the guard position.

c. Forward or backward glide.

d. Ground fighting position when unable to recover to feet before attacked.

He must : drill his men in these methods of hand-to-hand attack in close combat:

17

- a. The kick as the basis of hand-to-hand attack and maintenance of good kicking distance in every encounter is essential to avoid permitting the opponent to close or grapple.
  - (1) Side kick from either guard position at the opponent's groin (a speed of return equal to the speed of kick is important to avoid opponent catching the foot).
  - (2) Pivot kick from either guard position with either groin or kidneys as the target (more powerful than the side kick and can be launched from a greater distance).
- b. Heel stomp, best used against a prone opponent; drive heel down forcefully as if to drive the back edge of the boot heel into the ground, recover quickly.
- c. Rear strangle takedown, attacking from the opponent's rear. (For details see FM 21-150, "Combatives.")
- d. Use of a length of wire or stout cord employing either the one-hand or two-hand loops to strangle a surprised opponent, particularly when silent operations are required.

He will : drill his men in countering hostile close combat attacks before or immediately after a hold is secured, using bites, kicks, or blows at vulnerable points to help break the hold, together with one or more of these counters:\*

18

- a. A check blow with hand or elbow to a vulnerable target.
- b. A finger jab to the eyes or throat.
- c. The arms pin counter followed by a blow to opponent's groin or stomach.
- d. The front body hold counter used only when opponent is too close for use of kick or finger jab.
- e. The side or pivot kick counter using lower arm, fist, or nearest foot.

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\*For details see FM 21-150, "Combatives."

f. Defense against bayonet attack--used only when no other defense is possible:

(1) Use a high or low parry with follow-up as counter to high or low thrust.

(2) Use bayonet disarming techniques for counters to a long or short thrust.

: will drill his men in unarmed attack to include use of:

19

a. Hip, reverse hip, overshoulder, and overhead throws.

b. Cross-hock, rear, and front-leg takedowns. (For details see FM 21-150, "Combatives.")

: drill his men in countering a hostile hand-to-hand attacker with a knife, employing:

20

a. Use of knife disarming counters to a downward, upward, or side-stroke of a knife. (For details see FM 21-150, "Combatives.")

b. Any available object as an aid, such as a stout stick or shovel, in attempting to knock the knife from the opponent's hand, or to strike him in a vulnerable spot.

c. Diverting means such as throwing sand or dirt into the attacker's eyes in combination with evasive action, with a quick attempt to seize the initiative while the attacker is at a disadvantage.

4. THE IRPL WILL, DURING COMBAT, EXERCISE COMMAND CONTROL AND SUPERVISION OVER THE PLATOON'S EMPLOYMENT OF THE BAYONET KNIFE AND OTHER TYPES OF HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT TO THE EXTENT THE SITUATION PERMITS.

He will : ensure that all bayonet-equipped men enter combat with their bayonet knife, aided in its use by timely directions combined with well understood SOP's involving:

21

a. The fixing of the bayonet knife on command or signal, or upon the individual initiative of the soldier when close combat is anticipated, in either an offensive or defensive situation.

b. The fixing of the bayonet knife on order or individual initiative action promising to require its use impends, such as when:

- (1) The platoon is about to launch an assault upon a hostile position.
- (2) A hostile attack appears likely to close with the platoon's defense especially if visibility is limited.
- (3) A patrol or raid is to move through terrain favoring its close range surprise under conditions of limited visibility.
- (4) Members of the platoon are to control or escort groups of prisoners of war.

He must : ensure that members of his platoon about to engage in close combat operations necessitating secrecy and the use of silent weapons, or under conditions precluding the use of firearms, are properly equipped with silent weapons and specifically cautioned as to the necessity for silence when:

22

- a. The weapons available and considered for use include the bayonet knife or a similar weapon, suitable wire or cord for use in strangling, and/or blackjack or similar club.
- b. Operating close to a hostile position to gain information, take prisoners, or silence a sentinel or other hostile security personnel.
- c. On long-range reconnaissance patrols where the use of firearms would be inadvisable except as a last resort.
- d. On missions where prisoners may have to be taken, searched and gagged.
- e. Operating in extremely confined areas such as caves or tunnels where the use of firearms might cause cave-in or stun the user.

He will : ensure that all members of the platoon are proficient in the approved procedures for the searching of prisoners to include:

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- a. Wherever possible moving prisoner(s) to an area where friendly assistance is available.
- b. Where an unassisted search of a prisoner is necessary:

- (1) As a preliminary, the prisoner is convinced by words or actions that he will be killed if he resists.
- (2) The prisoner is not allowed to talk, look back, move his arms, or take any distracting action.
- (3) The prisoner is first placed at a disadvantage in an unbalanced position either prone, kneeling, or required to lean against a wall or support with feet crossed and as far as possible to the rear.
- (4) The prisoner is not permitted within arms length until in an unbalanced position.
- (5) If armed with a knife or pistol it is kept ready to use on side away from prisoner.
- (6) Vigilance is maintained even after search is completed.

He must : ensure that all members of the platoon are proficient in the proper techniques of searching a prisoner to include:

24

- a. The initial "patting" or "feel" method, paying attention to armpits, arms, back, groin area, legs, clothing folds around waist, chest and boot tops. (Especially care is required if a hand is placed in the prisoner's pockets or clothing folds.)
- b. When armed with a rifle, the search can profitably be proceeded by having the prisoner lie down on stomach, arms and legs extended, and close together; the rifle muzzle is kept at the small of prisoner's back ready to fire; after the first search is completed, the prisoner is required to turn on his back and searched from the front with the rifle against his stomach.
- c. When armed with knife or pistol, to search a prisoner leaning off-balance against a support with searcher's left foot in front of prisoner's feet and knife or pistol ready at searcher's right hip, search his left side, remaining ready to kick his feet out from under him if he moves; to search his right side, reverse the procedure.

- d. Another method of search when armed with knife or pistol is to place the prisoner off-balance by having him spread his legs far apart, locking his fingers together on top of his head, remaining clear of him, weapon ready in right hand and close against searcher's body, search him thoroughly.
- e. When searching more than one prisoner, place all of them at a maximum disadvantage by one of the preceding methods and then search each in turn, meanwhile keeping searcher's weapon ready and watching all of them carefully throughout.

He will : practice all men in the techniques of securing and gagging prisoners to include the use of expedient equipment such as shoelaces, belts, neckties, handkerchiefs or twisted strips of cloth, coupled with pieces of rope or wire which should be carried if the taking of prisoners is anticipated.

25



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13. ABSTRACT

This document is one of a series of research by-products that details the critical skills, knowledges, and performances the infantry rifle platoon leader must possess for effective individual and unit combat performances. The overall goal of the research is to improve officer training in these critical combat skill areas necessary for effective leadership. This document concerns the critical skill requirements in the area of bayonet knife and hand-to-hand combat.

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